DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 561 CS 509 599

AUTHOR Sauls, Samuel J.
TITLE Who's Running College Radio?
PUB DATE 1997-03-28
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Joint Meetings of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association (San Antonio, TX, March 26-29, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; Faculty Advisers; Financial Support; *Higher Education; Programming (Broadcast); *Radio; *School Funds; Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Campus Radio Stations

ABSTRACT

While management styles and theories differ among administrators of college radio stations, the views concerning the operation of college radio tend to be consistent. Common elements present in varying degrees in every college radio stations include public broadcasting philosophy, community needs, management and staff, financing, school relations, and audience feedback. College radio stations are normally housed within an academic department of a school or college dealing with some form of communications studies. College radio is a full-time operation run generally by part-time, mostly volunteer staffs. Quite often, college radio stations are supervised by a faculty advisor who fulfills the duty of station manager. Most college radio stations receive their funding via some arm of the student government, which is usually in charge of overseeing (or at least recommending) the allocation of student fees. The aspect of control and funding becomes particularly interesting when the station coverage of school events, such as athletics, begins to take precedence over normal programming and station operation. (Contains 12 references.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 411 561

Running head: COLLEGE RADIO

WHO'S RUNNING COLLEGE RADIO?

Samuel J. Sauls, Ph.D.

Department of Radio, Television and Film

University of North Texas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Sauls

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Prepared for
1997 PCA/ACA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
RADIO INTEREST GROUP
San Antonio, Texas
March 28, 1997

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

WHO'S RUNNING COLLEGE RADIO?

Introduction

While management styles and theories differ among administrators of college radio stations, the views concerning the operation of college radio tend to be consistent. The day-to-day operation of such stations is totally dependent upon the ideals undertaken by managers and, thus, put into effect at the station itself.

To further understand the concept of college radio (stations operating on college and university campuses, including 2-year colleges), this paper focuses upon the structure and management of college radio stations. In particular, the control of the operation of the station itself is analyzed. Included is a detail of the inherent components of such facilities, including ownership. Additionally, intrinsic aspects specific to college radio stations are addressed. These include the topics of operating within an academic environment, student staffing and training, the role of the faculty advisor, and the allegiance between funding and control.

Components and Ownership

In 1977, Donald N. Wood and Donald G. Wylie wrote in their book, Educational Telecommunications, that "certain common elements are present in varying degrees in every open-circuit noncommercial TV or radio station--although some of these elements may be taken for granted in a given station" (p. 72). Here, the authors were specifically addressing what they called the *Twelve Components of a Public Broadcasting Station*, which could be "used as a set of guidelines or criteria against which to evaluate the structure and performance of any local public station" (p. 72).

For the application to college radio, all 12 of the components are legitimate and a good overview of the structure to be found in such an operation: (1) Public Broadcasting Philosophy; (2) Community Needs; (3) Governing Board; (4) Management and Staff; (5) Financing; (6) Community Involvement; (7) FCC License; (8) Physical Plant; (9) Nonlocal Programing; (10) School Relations; (11) Publicity and Promotion; and (12) Audience Feedback (Wood and Wylie, pp.72-75). (Theoretically, all college and university broadcasting is "public broadcasting," expect for

those few stations commercially licensed.) Thus, these components provide a good vehicle in which to analyze a particular station and its structure. It is therefore a good starting point to determine how the station is operated...and thus, who is running the station.

The authors also purported that when studying the structure and operation of a station it is helpful to view the categories of station ownership, of which they comprised four traditional designations: (1) University Stations; (2) School-Owned Stations (those owned by school districts, for example); (3) State-Owned Stations; and (4) Community Stations (pp.75-78). The applicability for college radio falls under the category of University (College) Owned Stations:

> Many of the university and college stations are related--directly or indirectly--to a broadcasting or communications curriculum. ... University stations sometimes, however, run into identity problems. As an integral part of the academic community, the station management is very much attuned to the "ivory tower" intellectual atmosphere--frequently drawing heavily upon university resources and faculty for erudite and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> cultural programing. At the same time, the station management is aware of the need to relate to the general community--trying to aim for a more general, less elite audience (p.76).

The authors summarized by stating that "depending upon who owns and finances the stations--and for what purposes--stations have certain similarities and differences" (p. 75). Furthermore, "the important principle behind any attempt at categorization is simply to point out that the purpose and licensee of a [ ] station will dictate, to a great extent, its structure, financing, and programing policies" (p.78).

The Academic Environment

As mentioned earlier, normally, college radio stations are housed within an academic department of a school or college dealing with some form of communications studies (Radio/Television/Film, Journalism, Mass Media/Mass Communications, Speech, etc.). Thus, the station is operating under the auspices and direction of an academic province. In other words, a business type day-to-day operation (the radio station) is running in a non-vocational world (academics). And so, as might be expected, problems do arise.

From the outset, members of the academic department will, at times, voice there opinion as to the operation of the station. While faculty members make suggestions as to the operation and programming of the station, they do not actually participate in the operation. These recommendations, made under the best intentions, on how to "run the station" from those not directly involved are not always welcomed by station management (who also is usually at least part of the department -- either faculty or staff).

> The manager or faculty advisor quite often views these suggestions as negative criticism. Additionally, many times the manager/advisor sees [themselves] as the only one participating from the department in the operation of the station. So, the manager/advisor's internal response to such recommendations is "if you want to change the station, why don't you help me!" (Sauls, 1996, Feedback, p. 21)

Staffing and Training

"I just scheduled for my Spring Trimester, and my station's staff will be around 170. ... Is this any type of record? Is anyone out there in a similar situation?" ... "180 up here at [call letters] is standard for us." ... "We

typically [run] with 80+ staff, from 8am-2am[,] 7 days" (personal communication, National Association of College Broadcasters ListServ, March 11-16, 1997). While these numbers appear both staggering and impressive, the fact is college radio is a full-time operation run by generally part-time, mostly volunteer staffs. These stations are staffed by volunteer "non-professional" students, along with possible skeleton part or full-time paid staff member(s). Basically, these are full-time entities operated by part-timers and volunteers.

To further the dilemma, natural academic attrition provides that a quarter of your staff will graduate every year. Of course, this provides college radio with one of its unique features -- their all different and constantly changing. Thus, though, the challenge remains with the manager constantly dealing with a changing staff. Turnover -- even in the middle of the semester -- is guaranteed!

"College radio is truly the training ground for tomorrow's broadcasters, providing the student an opportunity to practice techniques in broadcasting" (Sauls, 1995). Of course, part of this training is to allow for the actual running of the station. The stations attempt to give

students the opportunities to work in a somewhat professional environment, make mistakes, and learn from their experiences. But, the point is raised, are the students running the station? As was brought out in 1996, "here it must recognized that 'because of their limited life experience, students may not always know the difference between promotion, public relations, and pressure (Holtermann, 1992)' from outside entities, particularly record promoters (Wilkinson, 1994)" (Sauls, Feedback, p. 20). While the aspects of what college radio plays in training students (see Kruse, 1995, pp. 179-180) and the perceptions of college radio in general are debatable (see Reese, 1996 and Sauls, 1993), it is here that station administration and management play a critical part. This leads to the role of the faculty advisor as station manager.

The Faculty Advisor

Quite often, college radio stations are supervised by a faculty advisor who fulfills the duty of station manager. (There is the possibility that a full-time staff station manager may be present.) This individual oversees the administration and operation of the station on a day-to-day basis, providing the needed continuity as student staffs

change year-to-year, as was mentioned earlier. Thompsen, in 1992, wrote that "a faculty advisor can be a driving force in shaping a vision for the station, the reasons for its existence" (p. 14). Such demands of station administration and supervision of a faculty advisor are normally in addition to their normal workload requirements of teaching, research, and service. So, it is not odd for the individual manager to, at times, place the operation of the station in a secondary position. The fact remains that the faculty advisor is a faculty member first, and station manager second. But, the sole responsibility for operating the station is with the faculty advisor. When problems arise, it is their duty to handle the situation. And, these problems reflect on their ability to manage the station.

One aspect that may assist the station manager and the station in general is the realization that quite often the audience itself (including the school administration, other departmental faculty, and the student body) does not understand what the station is trying to accomplish. Thus, there is "a need for the station and individual staff member[s] to 'educate' the audience on what college radio

and what [their] particular station is all about" (Reese, 1996, p. 19).

Funding and Control

An aspect that must be discussed is the alliance between who pays for college radio and who controls college radio. The fact of the matter is that most college radio stations receive their funding via some arm of the student government, which usually is in charge of overseeing (or at least recommending) the allocation of student fees. It is a fact that those of us in college radio are constantly battling with the idea that while students are paying for the support and operation of the station through fees, their input is limited as to what the station actually programs. "The moral is KEEP CONTROL. The last thing you want is to have a college station that the students don't like[,] but end up paying for with their tuition dollars" (personal communication, National Association of College Broadcasters ListServ, February 18, 1997).

Because most campus radio stations are under the auspices of an academic department within the college or university (as was brought forth earlier), the presence of the station can compliment actual coursework. The station

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

faculty manager/advisor here plays the ever important role of connection between the co-curricular activities of the station and departmental courses and academics. Because of this relationship between the station advisor and academic department, it must be recognized that "financial resources and operating procedures are almost entirely determined by the academic missions of the department" (Ozier, 1978, p. 34). The findings of studies reflect the important association between academic programs and the funding and purposes of college radio (see Sauls, 1993). But, is the department running the college radio station?

Finally, the aspect of control and funding becomes particularly interesting when the station coverage of school events, such as athletics, begins to take precedence over normal programming and station operation. Here, as a college radio station manager, one may begin to question the allegiance to student staff, station audience, and the funding source. It may even go so far as to the point that outside entities (other stations in the market) begin to replace the "student" operation. For example, the use of commercial radio broadcasters via simulcasting of school

athletic events. A general manager of a student radio station recently wrote that:

> The students who operate [call letters] radio are very strongly opposed to this idea. We feel that since the station is student funded and operated[,] that the broadcasting of football and men's basketball games should be done by students. [Call letters] currently broadcasts women's basketball, women's volleyball, and baseball - all with student broadcasters. Having professional broadcasters on our frequency damages the integrity of our station. We feel that we should not give up our principles for any amount of money[.] We don't want to sell out. (Personal communication, National Association of College Broadcasters ListServ, February 18, 1997.)

Thus, the true question does become, "who's running college radio?"

References

Holterman, S. (1992). The relationship between record companies and college music directors: A descriptive study of alternative radio. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Kruse, H. C. (1995). Marginal formations and the production of culture: The case of college music (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995). Dissertation Abstracts International, A56109.

National Association of College Broadcasters. [On-line WWW]. (n.d.). NACB@lLISTSERV.SYR.EDU. Available: http://www.hofstra.edu/~nacb/.

Ozier, L. W. (1978). University broadcast licensees: Rx for progress. Public Telecommunications Review, 6(5), 33-39.

Reese, D. E. (Spring, 1996). College radio from the view of the student staff and the audience: A comparison of perceptions. Feedback, 37(2), 17-19.

Sauls, S. J. (1993). An analysis of selected factors which influence the funding of college and university radio stations as perceived by station directors (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas, 1993) Dissertation Abstracts International, 54(12), 4372.

Sauls, S. J. (1995). College radio. Entry submitted to the Encyclopedia of United States Popular Culture. Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press.

Sauls, S. J. (1996). The Culture of American College Radio. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Sauls, S. J. (Spring, 1996). College radio: Points of contention and harmony from the management perspective. Feedback, 37(2), 20-22.

Thompsen, P. A. (1992). Enhancing the electronic sandbox: A plan for improving the educational value of student-operated radio stations. Feedback, 33(1), Cover, 12-15.

Wilkinson, J. S. (1994). College radio: Farm team or free form funhouse? Feedback, 35(1), 4-7.

Wood, D. N. and Wylie, D. G. (1977). Educational Telecommunications, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.,), 72-75.